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SUBJECT: GREEK VIEWS ON FEBRUARY GAERC ISSUES

REF: DANIEL WEISFIELD E-MAIL 02/12/2009

Classified By: POLCOUNS ROBIN QUINVILLE. REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) DepPolCouns delivered ref points on U.S. positions on the February 23-24 GAERC to MFA European Correspondent Niki Kamba. Kamba said the agenda for the GAERC included: Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Western Balkans, and the Eastern Partnership. On Sudan, she said that no discussion was now planned, but if the ICC issued an arrest warrant defferal for President Bashir, the GAERC would then take it up. She expected the meeting essentially to be a "brain-storming session" with no conclusions. GAERC conclusions were more likely at the March meeting.

12. (C) The following comments from Kamba are grouped by agenda item:

AFGHANISTAN: Kamba said the EU wanted to focus on this issue and to have a thorough discussion leading to a strengthening of efforts. Agreeing with our demarche point, she said the EU believed that our efforts must move beyond the military to a comprehensive strategy that also included political, economic, and assistance dimensions. It was also important to increase Afghani involvement in the efforts. Recruitment and Afghani buy-in, she argued, had thus far not been good. Thus, we needed to find more incentives. The August elections were also an important factor to bear in mind, and Greece supported the idea of a strong monitoring mission. Kamba did not go so far, however, as to say Greece would play a prominent role in such a monitoring mission.

MIDDLE EAST: Re-starting of the Peace Process was important for Greece. Kamba expected much discussion about increasing humanitarian assistance to Gaza, but she said Greece also believed the political dimension was essential as well. Greece believed the will to continue with the Peace Process still existed, despite recent developments. If a stable ceasefire timetable were worked out, then dialogue could resume. Kamba also mentioned that the EU border monitoring mission was prepared to deploy as soon as the parties gave consent.

WESTERN BALKANS: GAERC discussion on the Balkans was expected only at the lunch, when foreign ministers only would participate. Kamba reiterated well-worn Greek positions on supporting the EU accession of Western Balkan countries, but she noted that some EU member-states were suffering enlargement fatigue -- particularly during the current economic downturn.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: Kamba said this was a high priority for the Czech Presidency. She expected no conclusions at the GAERC meeting. She noted that the Eastern Partnership Initiative was flexible and tailored to meet the different needs of the various partner countries. On Belarus, she said that while the EU too wanted to see more substantial reforms,

it was important to be realistic. Greece would support any initiative to move Belarus closer to the EU, but "we must keep a close eye on Lukashenko."

SPECKHARD